

# Research on the Path in Which Local Universities Serve Regional Economic and Social Development

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**Abstract:** In the new era, improving the quality of personnel training in colleges and universities and implementing high-quality development strategies is the key to driving regional economic and social development. To achieve this goal, local colleges and universities must explore innovative approaches to education, address challenges hindering the integration of academic learning with practical experience, and foster closer partnerships with businesses. By leveraging the expertise of individuals in science and technology, these institutions can drive growth in local industries, creating mutually beneficial outcomes for both academia and enterprises. This paper examines the role of local higher education institutions in regional development, offers reform proposals from diverse perspectives, and provides actionable recommendations.

**Keywords:** Local universities; Service function; Regional economy; Social development

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## 1. Relationship between local universities and regional economic and social development

### 1.1. Higher education supports the development of local industries

Higher education can promote regional economic development, which is reflected in multiple levels. For instance, local colleges and universities annually produce professionals across diverse fields, injecting fresh ideas and youthful vigor into enterprises, thereby catalyzing their production and operations. As enterprises grow and expand, their overall economic contributions are augmented, exerting a positive influence and fostering the sustainable development of the local economy<sup>[1]</sup>.

### 1.2. Regional economic development can promote local higher education

As the local economy continues to evolve, new needs and expectations emerge, spanning across teaching, education, and social services. In response, local colleges and universities have proactively enhanced and optimized their respective work and education systems<sup>[2]</sup>. This proactive approach underscores the influence of regional economic and social development, which serves as a driving force for the advancement of local

higher education. Moreover, the progress in regional economic and social development also reflects the overall capabilities of the region to some extent, offering support and assurance for the educational endeavors of local colleges and universities.

### **1.3. Regional economic development and higher education are symbiotic**

Aligned with a mutual goal, universities bolster cooperation to stimulate the development of local industries, thereby cultivating favorable conditions for both livelihoods and production. Rooted in this shared vision, colleges and universities consistently adapt their educational methods to meet the evolving needs of the present, ensuring relevance and responsiveness. Concurrently, regional development requires a substantial pool of talent and thrives through reforms facilitated by these individuals, thus fostering a symbiotic relationship between the two endeavors <sup>[3]</sup>.

## **2. The dilemma of local universities in serving regional economic and social development**

### **2.1. Lagging service concepts**

Local colleges and universities face significant challenges in both academic management and scientific research. A prominent issue is the prevalence of homogeneity and a standardized approach to education. Many institutions excessively emulate the operating models of prestigious universities without considering the local economic and social context. This hinders the full utilization of the distinctive characteristics and strengths of local colleges and universities <sup>[4]</sup>. Furthermore, some researchers prioritize quantity over quality in academic pursuits, focusing solely on publishing papers, securing project funding, and producing monographs, while neglecting the practical application and commercialization of research findings. Consequently, numerous research outcomes remain purely theoretical and fail to translate into practical innovations. This not only diminishes the socioeconomic impact of academic research but also results in graduates who possess theoretical knowledge but lack practical skills and innovative thinking, failing to meet the demands of economic and social development for skilled professionals <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **2.2. Incorrect positioning**

To effectively utilize colleges and universities for talent development and address the demand for skilled individuals, it is crucial to set clear teaching goals that lay a strong foundation for quality growth. However, various obstacles hinder this process, especially in aligning institutional objectives with regional economic development. One significant challenge is the discrepancy between the disciplines offered and the skills needed for local economic and social progress. This mismatch weakens the schools' ability to contribute to local development and impedes progress toward achieving high-quality development goals <sup>[6]</sup>.

### **2.3. Lack of initiative in school-government cooperation**

As for universities themselves, their development cannot be separated from the support of the government. However, some universities often regard teaching and scientific research as their main tasks, and neglect the function of serving the local government. Their enthusiasm and initiative in communication with local governments are not strong, which leads to the dilemma of “floating in written agreements, few cooperation results, and insufficient cooperation depth” <sup>[7]</sup>. This situation not only affects the effectiveness of colleges and universities in serving local development but also restricts the process of cooperation between colleges and local governments.

## **2.4. Superficial collaboration between universities and enterprises**

From the university's standpoint, some institutions prioritize the quantity of collaborative enterprises over the actual effectiveness and quality of research outcomes. This emphasis on quantity over quality often results in collaborative projects failing to meet expectations, with some even being abandoned<sup>[8]</sup>. Additionally, shortcomings in research management and incentive mechanisms within universities pose challenges in effectively motivating researchers to innovate.

Considering the perspective of enterprises, amidst China's evolving economic landscape, businesses are urged to adapt their development strategies and leverage advancements in science and technology. However, some regional enterprises fail to recognize this need, maintaining outdated modes of thinking and development practices. Certain enterprises prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term potential, lacking the willingness and motivation to engage in deep collaboration with colleges and universities<sup>[9]</sup>.

## **2.5. Imperfect service evaluation mechanism**

The absence of an established evaluation mechanism for school-local government cooperation results in insufficient implementation of collaborative efforts in some regions. Moreover, the current evaluation system for scientific and technological achievements in universities lacks comprehensive criteria and fails to establish a scientific and effective evaluation mechanism. Consequently, researchers lack the motivation to align their work with market needs and local economic development. Additionally, the lack of clear delineation of responsibilities and assessment standards hampers university-local cooperation, confining collaboration to surface-level coordination and preventing substantive engagement. From the university's perspective, the inadequacies in the evaluation system for scientific and technological achievements also hinder cooperation with regions. Presently, university research evaluations prioritize academic value over market value and the commercialization of scientific and technological breakthroughs. This traditional evaluation approach undermines researchers' incentive to focus on market demands and local economic development, consequently resulting in a low conversion rate of scientific and technological achievements<sup>[10]</sup>.

# **3. Strategy of local colleges and universities in promoting local economic construction**

## **3.1. Upholding the purpose of service and changing the concept of service**

In the evolving landscape of the new era, educators in schools and universities must embrace a forward-thinking approach, staying informed, fortifying their convictions, and adeptly seizing development opportunities. Regarding personnel training and social services, teachers should adopt a mutually beneficial development strategy. To adapt to the changing dynamics, educators should deeply analyze the linkages between students and regional economic development, embracing a multi-faceted perspective on the evolving development paradigm. Additionally, schools should intensify publicity efforts to ensure administrators and teachers grasp the nuances of the new talent training mechanisms and regional economic development strategies while providing effective ideological guidance<sup>[11]</sup>. Moreover, universities should actively explore innovative avenues for university-local collaboration, contributing significantly to societal advancement.

## **3.2. Laying a solid foundation for providing services and defining the educational orientation**

Accurate positioning of the school's goals is fundamental for establishing a robust foundation of service and ensuring stable development. In the context of the new era, colleges and universities must align their objectives

with the developmental needs of students and the regional economic landscape. This entails precisely defining educational goals, establishing disciplines and majors that align with regional economic development, and leveraging the strengths of the talent training mechanism<sup>[12]</sup>. For instance, a domestic university deeply assesses the local economic and industrial structure, development status, and actual needs. Subsequently, it introduces new courses and majors based on existing disciplines and specialties. This approach not only preserves cultural heritage but also fosters rapid development of the local economy, offering a blueprint for educational reform and the integration of industry and education in other regions.

### **3.3. Unleashing the service potential and expanding the scope of collaboration**

Indeed, high-quality services and notable achievements not only bolster the market competitiveness of enterprises but also elevate the social influence of universities<sup>[13]</sup>. To realize this goal, both universities and enterprises must collaborate to enhance top-level design, encompassing considerations like intellectual property protection, forms of cooperation, and outcomes. Strengthening top-level design promotes institutionalization of school-enterprise cooperation, ensuring a more stable and reliable foundation for collaboration. As the integration of industry and education and school-enterprise cooperation progresses, universities should steer towards local economic development, adhering consistently to the principle of integrating education with industry and expanding into markets. Cooperation should be structured in a modular and project-based manner to effectively meet the needs of regional economic development and transcend traditional ideological constraints. Moreover, universities should initiate projects and topics from a market perspective, striving to achieve landmark results that drive practical and deep collaboration with enterprises<sup>[14]</sup>. Simultaneously, enterprises should provide ample support to universities by establishing cooperation platforms and alliances, offering opportunities for university researchers to engage in enterprise product research and development. This support not only facilitates practical teaching but also enhances the quality and efficiency of talent training at colleges and universities.

## **4. Improving service quality and actively cooperating among universities**

The government plays a crucial role in facilitating cooperation between schools and universities. To ensure smooth progress, the government should take a leadership role and establish a dedicated team to promote collaboration between educational institutions and local authorities, tailored to the specific developmental context. This approach ensures that cooperation initiatives are effectively implemented and yield tangible results. Additionally, close collaboration between the two parties is essential. Establishing a resource-sharing platform facilitates integration and sharing of resources, encouraging competent individuals or teams to propose projects and drive progress. Leveraging university-region and university-enterprise cooperation platforms fosters scientific and technological innovation and economic development. As vital hubs for talent development, research, and innovation, colleges and universities play a pivotal role in regional economic and social progress. To better integrate into the broader regional development landscape, universities must take proactive measures. Establishing dedicated data centers and cooperation platforms is a key strategy in this regard<sup>[15]</sup>. Firstly, data centers enable universities to access comprehensive and accurate data, empowering them to better understand regional economic and social trends and provide informed policy recommendations and solutions to governments and enterprises. This enhances universities' ability to serve regional development while bolstering their own research capabilities and academic standing. Secondly, cooperation platforms facilitate deeper collaboration among universities, governments, and enterprises, driving collective efforts towards common goals.

## 5. Strengthening the services and improving the evaluation mechanism

To attain the new development objectives, local governments must ground their efforts in reality and continually refine evaluation and rating standards by enhancing collaboration with colleges and universities. It is crucial to acknowledge that encouraging teachers, students, and staff to engage in local economic development and infrastructure construction not only acknowledges their contributions but also incentivizes their active participation in social services. Additionally, governments and educational institutions should establish rigorous standards for participants and offer evaluation and advancement pathways. This approach not only affirms individual capabilities but also recognizes practical accomplishments. By doing so, we can encourage more teachers, students, and researchers to dedicate themselves to social services, contributing their expertise and efforts to local development. Incorporating local service within teacher performance evaluations, with tangible outcomes as a significant criterion, can further motivate teachers and students while ensuring the quality and impact of social services.

## 4. Conclusion

Local colleges and universities serve as vital hubs for talent cultivation, playing a crucial role in preparing individuals to contribute to local economic development across various industries. However, in the new era, certain limitations impede the ability of local educational institutions to effectively serve regional economic and social progress. Factors such as unstable collaboration between schools and enterprises and inadequate community engagement hinder the fulfillment of talent training objectives, leading to mismatches between graduates' skills and job requirements. To address these constraints, schools must clearly define their talent training goals, emphasize their social service functions, and proactively strengthen the linkage between educational programs and regional economic and social development. By adopting a regional economic development perspective, schools can forge new avenues of collaboration and effectively align education with the needs of the local community, thereby fostering a more seamless integration between academia and industry.

## Funding

- (1) Higher Education Teaching Reform in Jilin Province in 2024: Research and Practice on the Construction of Business English Major in Colleges and Universities of Jilin Province Serving Regional Economic and Social Development.
- (2) Higher Education Teaching Reform of Jilin International Studies University: Research and Practice of Integrating Ideological and Political Elements into Integrated Business English Courses from the Perspective of Wisdom Education.

## Disclosure statement

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